



Woodsom Farm, an interrelated complex of home, outbuildings and working landscape, is one of Amesbury's outstanding historical resources.

Historical photographs

provide important evidence of past organization of the landscape as well as architectural detail.

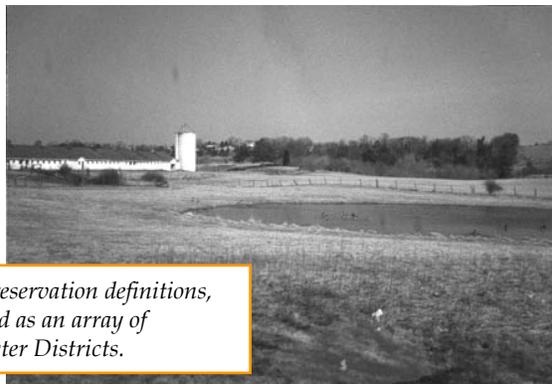


Character, Integrity and Detail

Every preservation project must answer the question, "What exactly is to be preserved?"

Preservationists need to define the elements that make a historic landscape special. *Character* makes a place memorable by evoking a particular set of circumstances related to time and place. *Integrity* makes it wholly true to that character. And *detail* is the physical expression of character and integrity, usually classified into elements of style.

The whole Woodsom Farm complex is definitely greater than the sum of its parts, and not every part is physical: for example, the activities that are programmed for a place contribute a great deal to its spirit.



In keeping with historic preservation definitions, Woodsom farm was studied as an array of landscape types, or Character Districts.

Woodsom Farm Master Plan

Amesbury, MA

Completed 2000

Walter Cudnohufsky Associates, Inc.
Ashfield, MA

Woodsom Farm is a historic homestead located in the proposed Lion's Mouth Road National Register Historic District in Amesbury, MA.

WCA collaborated with Davies and Bibbins Architects and Historic Preservation Planner Hedi Meltsner to prepare a Preservation Master Plan and design alternatives for the rehabilitation of the farm, part of which is owned by the Town.

The objectives

Through this community-based planning process, the team:

- Assessed the landscape opportunities and the needs of the client groups
- Articulated the emerging "program" in a public forum, to create consensus and establish priorities
- Transformed the priorities into design alternatives, to further the discussion and refine the program
- Assessed the economic feasibility of alternatives
- Devised strategies to make the project happen
- Presented summary reports at community events to generate support

The process

Research, presentation, and interaction with the Woodsom Farm Committee revealed program goals that promoted a broad use of Woodsom Farm, while protecting historic and landscape values. The importance of minimizing the impact of rehabilitation and ensuring long term maintenance and viability were stressed.

Preservation Planner Hedi Meltsner analyzed architectural character and detail, structure by structure, in order to determine their contribution to the historical significance of the entire Farm. The architects were able to use the resulting assessment to adapt the existing structures for reuse.

WCA provided a series of assessment and study drawings that allowed the Committee members to "visualize" the assets and constraints that the Farm landscape presented.

A "view corridor" study illustrated the elements that make Woodsom Farm a scenic resource, and a keystone in Amesbury's proposed Lion's Mouth Road National Register Historic District.

Woodsom Farm, continued

Landscape “Character Districts” were outlined to show the Committee how the array of landscape types individually contribute to the character of the farm.

The proposed accommodation of a carriage museum on the site, as well as farm-related activities and recreational facilities required the development of vehicular circulation and parking areas.

The spatial analysis that followed located and gave a name to potential landscape places, in terms of their landscape characteristics and best use.

Preservation vs. rehabilitation

The treatment called “preservation,” according to standards devised by the Secretary of the Interior, considers every existing landscape and architectural artifact on a site as evidence of its historic evolution. Because farms develop organically, with a growth pattern dictated by opportunity and circumstance, every artifact on a farm is an important element of its character.

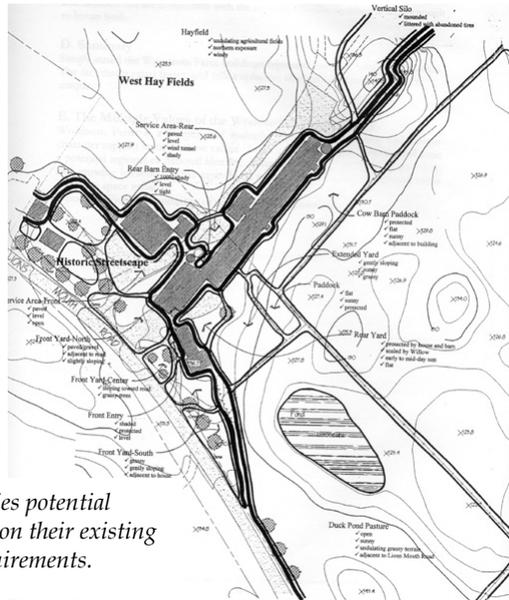
In order to keep a farm alive and part of a community, however, some adjustments to its structure may be required to comply with health and safety codes and to accommodate new activities. These modifications should be coherent with the spirit and organic evolution of the farm complex. This more flexible treatment is called “rehabilitation.”

Important objectives of rehabilitation include the development of a program that is coherent with historic use; the creation of safe and enduring structures that are easily and economically maintained; and the highlighting and accommodating of “change” as an essential element of farm character.

Social significance of Woodsom Farm

Giving voice to the social value of the Woodsom Farm project is an important strategy for gaining support. The Farm as planned would provide important experiences for Amesbury youth, such as meaningful contact with nature, manual activities, stewardship of living things, and participation in an open, supportive community.

The Farm is a symbol of the community’s humanity and consideration for the future of its children and grandchildren. Bringing the Farm to life is an expression of the power of collective civic action.

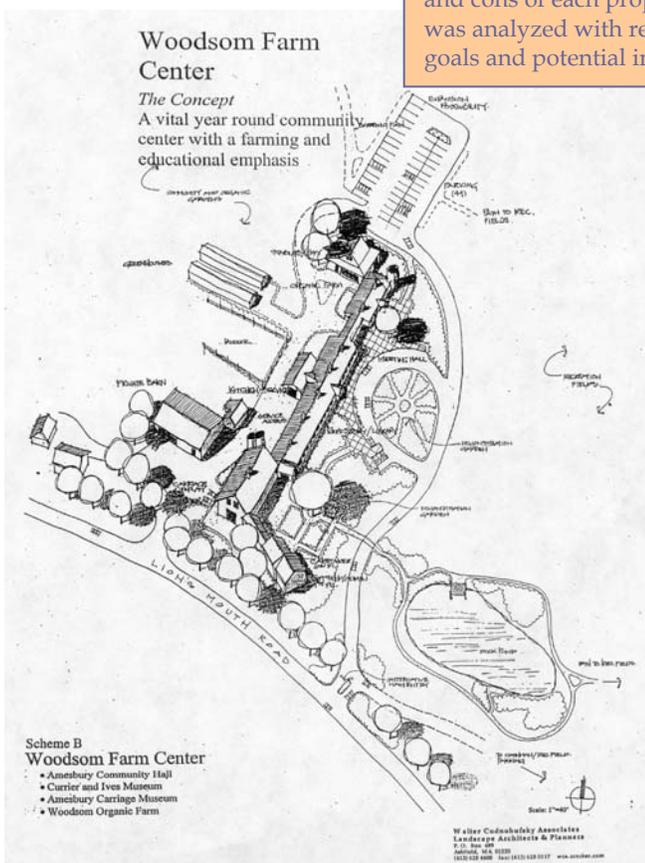


WCA’s spatial analysis identifies potential landscape “places,” based both on their existing character and the program requirements.

Historic Preservation and Parking

One of the overriding challenges in every landscape preservation project is vehicular circulation and parking. Because parking areas can be very disruptive to historic character, their design and location must be carefully studied to support accessibility and reduce environmental and visual impact.

WCA studied six alternative parking areas for Woodsom Farm. The pros and cons of each proposed location was analyzed with respect to program goals and potential impact.



WCA’s schematic design envisions the Farm as a vital community center.